







## What others say about IRM in Alberta

### A summary of three reviews

As we begin our second year of IRM Connections, we thought it would be timely to look at what others are writing about Integrated Resource Management (IRM) in Alberta. Work on IRM in Alberta is hitting a variety of radar screens, as evidenced by three recently completed reviews.

The first was commissioned by Alberta Environment and focused on the two existing regional strategy initiatives and was designed to assist the IRM Branch in developing a framework for future regional strategies. The second looks at the Northern East Slopes Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management Strategy (NES Strategy) from the perspective of an Alberta-based environmental group. And the third, produced by the University of Calgary's Canadian Institute of Resources Law, looks at the history, current state, and future of IRM in Alberta.

### Regional Strategies Initiative Review

"Before the initiation of any new regional strategies, we wanted to review the two existing regional strategy initiatives -the Regional Sustainable Development Strategy for the Athabasca Oil Sands and the NES Strategy - from outcomes, process and public involvement perspectives," explains Al Sanderson, Director of Alberta Environment's IRM Branch. "Information from the review is being used to assist us in developing a framework for future regional strategies."

Bill Page of Page Management Counsel Ltd. conducted the review, which featured 49 interviews. His report includes these key findings:

- Regional Strategies were seen as valuable by most interviewees. The primary value was described as a linking element in the policy and planning continuum in Alberta.
- Interviewees felt Regional Strategies should balance economic, social, and environment concerns, and be consistent with Provincial Vision and Directions.
- Interviewees had different definitions for what should constitute a "region".
- Interviewees were generally of the view that the future success of regional strategies will require the commitment of all parties (government, industry, communities, aboriginal, NGOs, public – the full range of stakeholders).
- Success will also require adequate support in terms of both dollars and staff resources.
- Interviewees raised a number of questions pertaining to value, outcomes, use, deliverables, and future steps. The answers need to be incorporated into the regional strategy development plan.

### An Analysis of Alberta's Northern East Slopes Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management Strategy

A report entitled has been completed for the Calgary/Banff Chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) by Wendy Francis, an Environmental Management Consultant based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Francis was asked to review the NES Strategy, examine its relationship to other initiatives in the region with emphasis on the framework for Grizzly Bear Conservation in the Alberta Yellowhead Ecosystem, analyze its process and substance in relation to CPAWS' goals, and recommend ways in which the process could be improved.

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## Quotable Quote

*"Many of the activities that humans engage in occur at local scales, but as these activities are repeated around the world, their effects accumulate; collectively, local changes can lead to regional and global changes. Many of the worst and of the best-known environmental problems resulted from the slow, day-by-day accumulation of small changes and dispersed activities."*

*Our Common Journey: a transition toward sustainability - 1999*

The CPAWS report recognizes that the Alberta government's efforts to revitalize integrated regional planning, particularly for minimizing the cumulative effects of multiple industrial activities on individual land bases, are commendable.

The report acknowledges positive elements of the NES Strategy including:

- ensuring government departments, boards and agencies with responsibilities related to the economy, natural resources or the environment acknowledge, pursue and reflect the sustainable development vision in their policies, legislation, programs and day-to-day activities,
- managing renewable resources to ensure their long-term viability and future use potential
- protection and maintenance of species diversity,
- more use of proactive analysis, environmental assessment and audits to identify and remedy problems at the earliest stages,
- regional landscape planning (i.e., Northern East Slopes strategy),
- recognition of the value of "wilderness lands" and the need to integrate protected areas within the regional landscape by the Northern East Slopes regional steering group, and
- a number of the issues identified by the NES Strategy regional steering group support the need for biodiversity protection, connectivity and appropriate management of lands adjacent to protected areas the development and application of management recommendations to ensure the persistence of healthy and viable grizzly bear populations in the NES ecosystem.

However, it concludes that there are many serious challenges to the achievement of CPAWS' goals through the NES Strategy since:

- none of the processes underway provide a mechanism for establishing more protected areas,
- government's policy of "honoring existing commitments" may limit the ability of these efforts to implement sustainable resource management, and
- though meaningful involvement in decisions is provided to local stakeholders, broader provincial interests such as CPAWS are relegated to having some lesser defined role.

## Integrated Resource Management in Alberta: Past, Present and Benchmarks for the Future

Steven A. Kennett of the Canadian Institute of Resources Law, University of Calgary authored this paper. With the premise that "those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it," the paper reviews Alberta's experience with IRM, going back to the 1947 creation of the Eastern Rockies Forest Conservation Board.

While suggesting that conditions have never been better to make IRM a reality, Kennett points to lessons from the history of IRM in Alberta that he states are directly relevant today including these two key factors:

- IRM did not penetrate to the structural level of policies, legislation, institutional arrangements and decision-making processes, and
- the land-use planning process at the heart of IRM was never entrenched in law.

The paper notes that these factors have already emerged as important issues for the NES Strategy, and that the draft framework developed by Alberta Environment provides a basis for progress. It goes on to suggest these two factors as important benchmarks for the future.



*"It was amazing to see everyone listening and learning from each other. We are ecstatic that people see the importance of our land and the need to collectively discuss its use."*

*Harvey Buckley, planning committee chair for The Land Supports Us All*

## The Land Supports Us All

A land use conference, entitled *The Land Supports Us All*, was held January 14-16 at Edmonton's Shaw Convention Centre. It attracted more than 700 participants including representatives from oil and gas, forestry, tourism, recreation, agriculture and mineral extraction companies, environmental advocacy groups, urban and rural planners, three levels of government and aboriginal groups.

"Attendance at this conference was a surprising demonstration of the level of interest in land use in the province," suggests Al Sanderson, Director of Alberta Environment's IRM branch, who spoke about IRM as part of the conference's "Landscape Planning" stream of concurrent sessions. Sanderson recalls that many speakers identified the need to develop a regional context, which is right in line with what regional sustainable development strategies are all about. "The future of successful natural resources management lies in cooperation and collaboration across disciplinary and operational lines," confirmed Jack Ward Thomas, an internationally respected wildlife biologist, author, and Chief Emeritus of the U.S. Forest Service, in his key note address.

Also on the agenda was John Donner, Alberta Environment's Assistant Deputy Minister of Strategic Directions, who introduced and moderated the concluding plenary session. He described the government's approach to integrated resource management as being an iterative, integrated and flexible one, which features regional planning that is informed by consultation and involvement and provides context and information to operational-level planning.

The conference Web site at: <http://www.landuse.ab.ca/> includes speaker notes for many of those who presented at the conference. Check it out!

## Towards the Development of a Provincial Land Use Strategy for Alberta

At the Ag Summit 2000, land use ranked third of 72 identified issues. As a result, a team called the Land Use Core Action Team (LUCAT), comprised of more than 30 stakeholders, was formed. Its purpose is to develop a provincial land use strategy for Alberta, and its five-year goal is to achieve public support for land use priorities by establishing improved land planning and conservation tools to protect working agricultural landscapes.

A LUCAT discussion paper entitled *Towards the Development of a Provincial Land Use Strategy for Alberta* was published in December 2001. It provides facts about Alberta's land base, noting that "resource competition is placing pressures on Alberta's finite land and water resources." It includes a historical perspective of land use in the province and highlights land base monitoring studies that have been conducted and existing legislation. It includes a discussion of municipal decision-making, including a list of 16 potential solutions, and suggests the need for new land use tools accompanied by 10 potential solutions. It concludes "There is a growing acceptance that land use issues have not, but must be, satisfactorily addressed . . . The development of a provincial land use framework involving all levels of government, the public, and industry, is the first step in planning the legacy of land use for our province." This LUCAT discussion paper is featured on the home page of the land use conference Web site at: <http://www.landuse.ab.ca/> Check it out!



## Consultations Continue to Shape NES Strategy

During February 2002, more than 300 individuals attended 18 public and stakeholder consultation sessions on the Northern East Slopes Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management Strategy (NES Strategy). In addition to the need to consider cumulative effects, the key issues and concerns raised at the sessions included:

**Access:** While some participants wanted increased access for off-highway vehicles and other recreation users, others were concerned about uncontrolled access to environmentally sensitive areas. While some would prefer light industrial development in FMA allocated land, concern was also expressed about decisions that might reduce the amount of forest to which the forestry industry has access. Some felt access for outfitters, guides and trappers is hampered by resource development, and others felt there is no level playing field for access to public lands and lands held by resource companies.

**Impact of Development:** Concern was expressed about disappearance of native species, erosion of Natural Areas, possible land use effects on the quantity and quality of groundwater, some forestry practices, and potential intensive livestock operations including the move of intensive livestock operation approval to NRCB. The potential for over-industrialization was also identified.

**Planning:** While some identified the need more joint planning and consideration of environmental impacts prior to development, others were concerned about potential negative impacts on the resource sector. Some identified concern about economic viability of local communities and the need to ensure balance between the environment and economic activity.

**NES Region Boundaries:** Some felt the Brazeau dam area should be included in NES region, and others were concerned the new NES boundary does not include 14 townships surrounding Swan Hills.

**Communication:** Participants expressed the need for more (clear and simple) communication about the existing situation and the tradeoffs being considered, and the need for more notice of meetings.

**Other:** A variety of other issues were raised including that grazing lease-holders may be benefiting unfairly from gas exploration and extraction on their lease land, and that there is no representation on RSG from ENGO community.

**Role of Provincial Government:** Participants identified the need to move and push things forward, including the need for a provincial framework of overall policy, consistency in approvals (one window) and in applying and enforcing regulations, and follow-up re: achievement of goals. There was some skepticism about whether there is the political will to make tough decisions, and concern that the current effort is too little too late.

### What's Next?

June 3-15 has been scheduled for the next round of consultation which will focus on potential options for resolving issues that have been identified. A final round of consultation will be scheduled for early September. For more information about the NES Strategy, check out the Web site at: <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/regions/neststrategy.html>

## Contribute to the future of IRM Connections

Once again, we're asking for your feedback so we can continue to meet your information needs. Please take a moment to complete the one-page evaluation (on-line at [http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/irm/irm\\_newsletters.html](http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/irm/irm_newsletters.html))

We're interested in your suggestions for initiatives we should feature, experts or organizations who could be interviewed or asked to contribute content, upcoming events we could promote and resources we could publicize. Please contact the Editorial Board:

- by e-mail at: [irm.newsletter@gov.ab.ca](mailto:irm.newsletter@gov.ab.ca)
- or by phone at (780) 427-4857 (toll-free by dialing 310-0000 and then entering the number)

# Connections

## Tackling land use and access issues

It's not just jobs and Albertans are looking out to enjoy the province's great outdoors. With ever-increasing demands on our public lands, there are a number of initiatives underway that are designed to address the access and land use issues that crop up. Parks are the heart of the province's growing economy of tourism and recreation. Parks are also the heart of the province's growing economy of tourism and recreation.

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